

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, SO US

SUBJECT: WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE ON BERBERA

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE BY MICHAEL MALIK OF REUTER ENTITLED
"INVITED REPORTERS BARRED FROM SOMALI INSTALLATION" APPEARED
IN THE WASHINGTON POST ON JUNE 30, 1975: QUOTE - BERBERA,
SOMALIA, JUNE 29 -- A GROUP OF FOREIGN JOURNALISTS, BROUGHT
HERE BY THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT TO DISPROVE U.S. CLAIMS THAT
THERE IS A SOVIET MISSILE BASE IN THIS SOMALI PORT, WERE
REFUSED PERMISSION TO INSPECT CERTAIN MILITARY INSTALLATIONS
TODAY.

THE GROUP, INCLUDING A TELEVISION TEAM FROM THE AMERICAN
BROADCASTING AND ME HAD BEEN BROUGHT HERE TO REFUTE U.S.
ALLEGATIONS THAT THERE IS A SOVIET MISSILE HANDLING AND
STORAGE FACILITY AS WELL AS A NAVAL BUNKERING AND SUPPLY
DEPOT AT THIS GULF OF ADEN PORT.

WE HAD REQUESTED PERMISSION TO SEE TWO AREAS THAT THE U.S.

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DEFENSE DEPARTMENT HAD LABELED IN SATELLITE PHOTOGRAPHS AS

AN ASSEMBLY BUILDING AND MISSILE BUNKERS.
IN HEATED EXCHANGES, MOHAMED SIAD SAMANTAR, SOMALI
AMBASSADOR IN PARIS, WHO ACCOMPANIED THE GROUP FROM

MOGADISHU, THE CAPITAL, SAID WE HAD NOT BEEN PROMISED
ACCESS TO SEE SOMALI MILITARY INSTALLATIONS, BUT ONLY TO
BE SHOWN THERE WAS NO "SOVIET BASE" IN BERBERA.

EARLIER THIS WEEK THE SOMALI AMBASSADOR IN NAIROBI HAD
INVITED SEVERAL JOURNALISTS AND TOLD US SPECIFICALLY THAT
WE COULD TAKE THE U.S. SATELLITE PHOTOGRAPHS TO BERBERA
AND SEE EVERTHING THEY SHOWED.

AFTER WE HAD BEEN SHOWN EVERY HOSPITALITY OVER THE LAST
TWO DAYS, THE TROUBLE STARTED THIS AFTERNOON AS WE DROVE
UP TO AN AREA JUST WEST OF BERBERA PORT, WHICH IS
SURROUNDED BY A WALL AND GUARDED BY SOMALI SAILORS WITH
RIFLES AND FIXED BAYONETS.

THE GUARDS INSISTED THAT ALL CAMERAS BE PUT AWAY AND WE
WERE THEN TOLD THAT WE COULD NOT ENTER BECAUSE IT WAS A
SOMALI MILITARY AREA.

"YOU HAVE SEEN BERBERA AND CAN SEE THERE IS NO SOVIET
MILITARY BASE", SAMANTAR SAID.

AFTER PROTESTS, WERE ALLOWED TO ENTER WITHOUT CAMERAS
BUT AFTER WALKING FOR ONLY A COUPLE OF HUNDRED YARDS WE
WERE TOLD TO STOP JUST WITHIN SIGHT OF A TWO-STORY
CONCRETE, HANGARLIKE BUILDING THAT APPEARED TO BE THE ONE
MARKED AS "HIGH-BAY CHECK-OUT ASSEMBLY BUILDING" IN THE
U.S. PHOTOGRAPHS.

WE WERE AGAIN TOLD: "NOW YOU HAVE SEEN IT", AND ESCORTED
OUT OF THE CAMP.

IN A FINAL ANSWER TO QUESTIONS, SAMANTAR SAID: "NO
GOVERNMENT IN THE WORLD COULD ALLOW JOURNALISTS TO INSPECT
ITS NATIONAL MILITARY INSTALLATIONS. WHY DO YOU WANT TO
SEE WHERE WE KEEP OUR AMMUNITION?"

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WHEN CHALLENGED WITH THE FACT THAT THE TERMS OF THE
UNSOLICITED INVITATION HAD BEEN TO SEE WHAT WE LIKED, HE
INSISTED THAT WE HAD BEEN ALLOWED TO SEE THAT THERE WAS
NO "SOVIET BASE" AS HAD BEEN ALLEGED. END QUOTE. INGERSOLL

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